



**Department of Energy**  
**National Nuclear Security Administration**  
Washington, DC 20585

March 26, 2003

Mr. Joseph A. Christoff  
Director, International Affairs  
and Trade

Mr. Robert A. Robinson  
Managing Director, Natural Resources  
and Environment  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Sirs:

In responding to a draft GAO report "Weapons of Mass Destruction: Additional Russian Cooperation Needed to Facilitate U.S. Efforts to Improve Security at Russian Sites", DOE stated that "the estimate of 600 metric tons of weapons-usable nuclear material in the Russian nuclear weapons complex given in the report seems very low". This letter clarifies that we agree with the figure of 600 metric tons as stated in the GAO report.

DOE's 1998 and 2001 Material Protection, Control and Accounting (MPC&A) strategic plans state that approximately 600 metric tons of weapons usable nuclear material is estimated to be in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). This figure does not include material in nuclear weapons.

During the last several years the Department has portrayed estimates of nuclear material in the FSU in two distinct categories. The first is weapons usable nuclear materials outside nuclear weapons - the 600 metric ton estimate. This category includes HEU or plutonium in metal or oxide forms, nuclear fuels, research materials, components removed from weapons, etc. The second category is nuclear weapons. For example, the Department uses an estimate of 4000 nuclear warheads to capture those warheads being addressed through our cooperative security work with the Russian Federation Navy. This represents only a portion of the total Russian warhead inventory.

This is consistent with GAO's approach in its report in which warheads and nuclear material are treated separately. The 600 metric tons are referred to as "weapons usable nuclear material." This is followed by a separate estimate of the Russian nuclear warhead stockpile of 18,000 - 25,000. We believe your presentation of the estimates is consistent with our own.



I hope this letter clarifies the intent of our comment. Please contact me directly if you want to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony R. Lane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Anthony R. Lane  
Associate Administrator  
For Management and Administration

cc: Acting Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation